*173 mission to Ngolo on the theory that the impetuous and violent young man could hardly fail to anger the old man, who would shortly do away with him by means of the occult practices known to marabouts. From the beginning, however, the old man realized that this was a man destined to accomplish great things; so he welcomed him kindly, gave him amulets and made him promise to follow his advice most exactly. Ngolo asked him to use his influence to effect a reconciliation with Mamari. So the old man warned Mamari that he could expect good fortune only if he lived in constant association with Ngolo, who "had luck."

[50] From that day forward, Mamari had Ngolo about his person. He added a thousand men to those already following Ngolo and, so that the latter could support his followers suitably, he gave him cattle and sheep. He had Ngolo live at Ségou-koro, and although the young man kept the name Sikoro Ngolo, he was [793] also given the title of dyenfa, meaning high priest of his idols. Of these, the two most important were ba Kungo-ba and na Ngolo-ko, which he had brought from Kaminiadougou.

Further, the old marabout of Niamina told Ngolo of a young girl in the village of Diaba destined to bear children who would have a brilliant future. On the basis of the learned man's advice, Ngolo asked the girl's hand in marriage; but she was an only child and her parents were no more anxious to lose her than she was to leave them. Mamari intervened, and upon his order the girl was handed over to Ngolo, while her grieving parents were recompensed with a gift of ten slaves.

In any case, Mamari's prudent friendship for Ngolo by no means blinded him to his own interests. He extended his influence less by warlike means than by very clever diplomacy. When he had settled in the Ségou area, the country between Dina and Kirango had about 40 cantons which were independent of each other. He was skillful enough to impose himself gradually as overlord by making use of the dissensions which divided them. By means of adroit diplomacy and an occasional successful campaign, he managed to gain control of the whole area.

In order to eliminate the barriers which tribes or families stubbornly maintained between one another, he moved whole groups of populations from place to place. Or he would establish

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby. Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
●793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

621 The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
776 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
778 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
[825] animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

621 successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that
776 case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

311 It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and
621 cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement bene-
794 fited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

793 The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest,
794 whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

794 The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of
796 offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

782 During these general gatherings, from which no one is
796 excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council
778 enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There,
+ the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

782 genie. The same is done with libations of dlo or the juice of
796 kola nuts. Since anything offered to the genie is supposed to be
786 consumed on the spot, an orgy lasting for several days usually follows.

782 In addition to these two great obligatory ceremonies especially concerned with the exploitation of the land, the god's protection is sought by similar, but much simplified means in all affairs whether they concern the entire settlement (wars, disasters), a particular patriarchal or familial community, or even a single individual. Through the high priest as intermediary, the offering and the request are made for the purpose indicated by the petitioner, who often promises to make a further gift to the genie when his wish has been granted. Vows of this type are made very frequently.

794 The cult of his high [230] priests and of all the im-
769 portant men of the settlement is tied in with the cult of the genie, obviously a consequence of the fact that the genie is the spiritual patron of the community which honors him; its members are his children and with him form what amounts to a family. So, in line with what happens in a patriarchal or familial community, the territorial community also holds an annual festival for the dead, during which special honor is paid to noted personages, among whom deceased high priests have first place.

311 Exploitation of the land. The high priest in charge of
621 the cult likewise regulates everything concerning the exploita-
423 tion of the terrestrial domain of the genie, and in this capacity
793 he is known as the dugu-tigi (1), master of the earth. In this

1. In line with common practice, I shall henceforth use this title to designate both capacities, the high priest and the master of the earth.

office he has the help of the council of fa, and in important matters he must follow their advice.

With the help of this council, he allots the land when

311 the community is founded. His permission is required before
621 anyone may build a dwelling in the portion reserved as the seat
423 of the community; the village is therefore kept within precise
793 limits. In practice, however, everyone builds wherever he pleases if there is no objection. If there is an objection, the dispute is settled by the dugu-tigi and his council.

423 Outside the village proper, the terrain includes fields
621 which, either at the start or during the course of settlement, are allotted in perpetuity to the various fa of the community by the dugu-tigi in council. Each fa and his dependents have indefinite use of the same fields, although by law the authority which assigned them may take them away without being required to justify the act. This use is a kind of usufruct that is more extensive than that of our law, since the beneficiary may
[425] use the land without restriction, except that he may not alienate it. The tenant, however, may not use the land in any way that might be prejudicial to the community as a whole without the consent of the dugu-tigi and council. For example, such would be the case if he proposed to give his right of use to an outsider.

Any land not specifically allotted [231] and anything it produces or contains belongs, theoretically, to the member of the community who cultivates it. Certain fruits or produce, however, are sometimes reserved for the community as a whole: the leaves or fruit of the baobab, karite, nété, tamarind trees, etc.; the fish in certain ponds, watercourses, fluvial zones,
[476] etc.; the game in certain cantons, etc. On the dates set for these collective enterprises by the dugu-tigi and his council, the people proceed in a body to gather fruit, harvest the crop, fish, or hunt. Sometimes each person is allowed to keep what he has gathered; sometimes all the proceeds are collected for the dugu-tigi to distribute according to custom. There are also special regulations governing the extraction of matter or materials from the ground.

621 Organization of the territorial community. The duties
622 of the dugu-tigi and his council are not limited to directing the cult and regulating the use of land. Anything that happens within the territorial community concerns the nyana-dugu-da-siri; because the members of the community are his children

561 and take an oath of secrecy. The boy leaves the n-Tomo
857 after the soli. Girls are not admitted.

881 The n-Tomo-tigi and his syere organize the association so as to assure it some property which in principle is collective property. Through common abuse, however, they are the primary if not the sole beneficiaries of it. They persuade their comrades to cultivate a field whose produce will provide the food for their club feasts. The entrance fee is augmented by force, spontaneously or at the order of the n-Tomo-tigi: gifts, collections, theft, hunting, fishing, etc.; in short, anything may be collected by individual or collective effort to form a kind of common treasury.

857 There is no collectivity, however, without its spiritual
793 patron. The n-Tomo meets out-of-doors, at the foot of a tree (1) believed to be the chosen home of a genie-protector.

1. The name "n-Tomo" comes from this. It has been thought that the term was simply the name of the tree where the genie-protector lives and that it was the tree which the Bambara call "n-Tomo." If this were true, why should people in Kaarta use the term "n-Tori" when the tree called n-Tomo does not change its name? It has been suggested that n-Tori is another word meaning "toad" and came from the peculiar "cry" characteristic of the society.

It is my belief that the two terms, "n-Tomo" and "n-Tori" designate the same grouping in different regions and have one and the same meaning: meeting, assembly.

The n-Tomo-tigi is the high priest of this genie; as such he receives the oaths of the neophytes and has a certain degree of authority over the whole band, which enables him to punish any misdeed committed by a n-Tomo-den'. He does not hesitate to use corporal punishment.

794 are all designed to attract and capture the god and, for this
782 purpose, to transfer the officiant from our world to the supernatural one. I have never heard anyone claim that the costume and the various actions of the officiant were intended to counterfeit the nyana, nor that the boli in any way represented the native's idea of the god.

The Clergy

•793 Even though, in theory, familial nyana are inherited, those worshiped by the brotherhoods are usually bought. The head of the brotherhood is called the nyana-tigi (master of the nyana) (1), whether he has inherited the office, been elected

1. Ordinarily the word nyana is replaced by the specific name of the nyana, Komo, Nama, Nya, etc.

to it, or has imposed himself by virtue of being the most prominent founder of the brotherhood. It is he who keeps the boli, hence his title of boli-tigi, and who knows all the secrets of the cult. His duty is to direct the cult and to administer the brotherhood, and this gives him considerable local prestige.

The initiates of higher rank are called dye-n-fa-u, "masters of the truth." The nyana-tigi chooses his aides from this group, particularly the person who, "seized by the god" (wara-mina-den'), becomes the "oracle" (wara-da). The role
[787 of medium requires special persons who can go into a trance
791] under the influence of the animating spirit, and the wara-da has the duty of choosing and training the person who will succeed him or replace him, if the need arises (2).

2. These dye-n-fa students are called soma-de (elder sons) in the Komo brotherhood.

All the initiates are to some extent diviners through practices which are peculiar to them, and the brotherhoods often

793 provide instruction in deductive divination, which usually requires two years of study.

This clergy is recruited and formed by co-optation, and it includes, besides the persons already mentioned, the muru-kala-tigi (3) or "sacrificer," who kills the victims, and a dyeli

3. Literally, "he who holds the handle of the knife."

or "herald" of the god.

794 The rank and file of the faithful are called nyana-den u, sons of the nyana (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above]. In order to be accepted as nyana-den', it is necessary [260] to take an oath and to pay an entrance fee. The terms of the oath used in the brotherhoods reveal that, in sum, the nyana-den' promises secrecy, obedience, and solidarity, as we shall show in what follows. Certain aides of the clergy are selected from among the common run of the faithful, for instance, the da-ro-tigi or da-ro-ta-la, who is a kind of beadle.

The Treasury

The performance of liturgical ceremonies is not the only function of the clergy; it also constitutes a kind of council to administer the property of the brotherhood, for the cult is not gratuitous. First, admission to the brotherhood requires the payment of a fee, and the same is true whenever an individual is nominated or promoted to an office. Furthermore, an important contribution, in proportion to the individual's resources, is required for any important ceremony. Finally, fines are imposed on the faithful and even on outsiders as punishment for wrong doings.

794 681 Fines assume many forms, whether they are to atone for a wrong committed by one of the faithful against the brotherhood or the god, whether an outsider is to be punished similarly for arousing the wrath of the nyana, or for reasons sometimes known only to the clergy who levies them. The nyana-tigi and

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794 covered by the cloak made of feathers from guinea fowl and
778 chickens. Beneath this garb, the wara-da performs all sorts of acrobatics. Skillfully manipulating the mask and the cloak during ritual dances, he gives the illusion, in the light of the fires, of a fantastic creature whose cries, transmitted through the horn, terrify even the initiated.

793 In addition to the wara-da, the clergy includes: a
794 Komo-tigi, high priest; some muru-kala-tigi, sacrificers; a da-ro-tigi, porter, who announces and prepares for the meetings; and a Komo-dyeli, herald. There are also student wara-da, called soma-den' (literally, "elder sons" in the special language), who act as assistants, and finally, there are many other auxiliaries who form a cortege with the wara-da when he carries the boli in nocturnal processions. These people are grouped together under the term tie-den' or tigi-den' ("sons of the master" in the special language). Conspicuous among them are the ta-tugu who [272] carry the flaming torches which are so characteristic of the nocturnal processions.

When the wara-da makes known the revelations of the god, he speaks through the tube with the horn. Since he uses the special language and since the tube distorts the sounds, the Komo-tigi must interpret for him. It is the Komo-dyeli who shouts the revelation which echoes through the night.

794 At the time of the two great annual ceremonies, the
796 wara-da takes the boli and the other liturgical equipment to the sacred grove. The Komo-tigi directs the ceremonies. The sacrifices are entrusted to the muru-kala-tigi among whom are to be noted: the one who brings the victim and who, when the ceremony takes place in the temple, leads it across the threshold (1); and the one who removes the victim and carries its body

1. This door is then called nyena-ma don'-da, "entry of the living," in the special language, and the muru-kala-tigi who brings the victim in is called da-kuna-sigi or "master of the fatal (literally 'bitter') door."

794 There are, of course, the usual accessories: kana,
[778] korti, siri-kun', pottery, bells, horns, and so forth.

Most of these objects are stored in a small hut called Nama-bon', similar to the native huts.

794 The ceremonies take place in a grove which is reserved
778 for the purpose. If there appears to be not enough privacy in spite of the dense foliage, or for some other reason, a palisade (dyase) or a few straw mats are put up to form an enclosure. In the special language of this brotherhood, the term for offering a sacrifice to the Nama is dyase son' (literally, "to honor the palisade").

794 The assemblage of the adepts of the same Nama constitute a Nama-ya, Nama brotherhood. Persons who wish to form a Nama-ya appeal to an existing Nama-ya to obtain the secrets or, more accurately, the rules governing the brotherhood: the mysterious words and acts by which the god (wara) is summoned and made amenable to his worshipers; cult objects; organization and role of the clergy and of the common worshipers; the liturgy, etc.

The fundamental ceremony by means of which the priest and his god are united is called furu, "union, marriage," in the special language of the brotherhoods. [276] Once a year, through the furu of the Nama, males and females, the Nama-de-u (spiritual sons of the Nama) are born. Behind this realism, required for the ordinary adept, is there not hidden a profound meaning for the initiate; is not close union with the diety a "spiritual marriage" in all the great religions? Possibly the special language is not intended merely to hide secrets from the prying curiosity of the profane, but is also intended to hide a profound meaning, today unknown to almost all the initiates, but felt and perhaps even known, at least vaguely, by some of them!

793 In every Nama-ya there are various functions and ranks,
794 corresponding to different grades of initiation. The grand master, Nama-tigi, is often the person who contributed the most for the expenses of founding the Nama-ya; he directs and watches over the cult and is therefore a feared and formidable personage.

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794 He is assisted by the dye-n-fa-u (masters of truth), among whom those who wear the headdress called Nama-kongolo are the oracles (wara-da) of the Nama. Other assistants have the duty of holding the horned boards (wara-se and nye-bla) during the ceremonies.

One adept serves as factotum under the title da-ro-tigi (master of the entrance) (1).

> 1. During the night when the Nama goes about the village to drive out sorcerers, the da-ro-tigi runs ahead of the dye-n-fa who wear the Nama-kongolo. Shaking his bell, he warns people off the road followed by the dye-n-fa, and he carries a torch to reveal the inquisitive. If he finds any such person, he warns the dye-n-fa in the special language to halt or to change their course. Then he questions the intruder, chases him off with blows, curses him, or, on the contrary, takes him into the group. He is thus truly "the one who guards the entrance," but he is like a concierge rather than a master who agrees or refuses to receive the visitor whom the concierge has admitted. We have pointed out an analogous emphasis in the title of ton'-masa, given to the head of the servants of the ton' even though the term literally means "head of the ton'."

This clergy is recruited by co-optation, and anyone named to it or promoted in it must pay for the privilage. The cleric is even more bound to secrecy than the common worshiper, since any indiscretion on his part would reveal the secrets of the cult.

794 The common adherents or the faithful are called Nama-de-u (children of the Nama), that is, spiritual sons of the Nama, but we shall see that when allusions are made during the ceremonies to a kind of material birth, this is plebeian mythology.

that period; his body will not be buried but will be carried off by members of the Komo, who will take it to a crossroads and crush it with the aid of komo-se-w [sic]. The remains will be hidden in a secret place. The same treatment is accorded to the komo-tigi who dies during his seven-year term.

The cult is cantonal, and the various komo-tigi take their orders from their colleagues of the capital. The cult formerly was interlcan and intertribal. Labouret (Les Mandingues et leur langue [The Mandingo and Their Language]) has made a table of the seven categories of persons who make up the hierarchical society of the initiates.

After initiation into the Komo cult, a natural sequel to circumcision, the young man may, if he so desires, be initiated into other cults. He then enters a powerful spiritual family which unites all its members by ties of brotherhood. This brotherhood is superimposed on the normal social hierarchy of the flã-tõ [this term is probably the same as flanton]. The chief of the brotherhood is entitled nyama-tigi; he is generally a man of caste or a slave. He acquires his position as chief either by inheriting it, by election, or by founding a new cult. To do this latter, he must buy an altar, gna, from the village or from the brotherhood that already possesses this cult. Such a purchase is considered a marriage with the gna and is accompanied by drinking. The higher-ranking initiates (dyenfaw: masters of the truth) are auxiliaries of the nyama-tigi and participate in the oracle, wara-da. All the initiates are more or less divine. The clergy includes, in addition, a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli, herald of the god. To become one of the faithful, one must pay an entrance fee and swear an oath of secrecy, obedience, and fellowship. The clergy manages the cult's treasury which is fed by the entrance fees to the brotherhood, by fees levied for a class promotion, by contributions required for the major ceremonies, and by fines imposed on the members.

The brotherhood is a spiritual family which is organized in a fashion similar to the natural filiation of the community. The nyama-tigi plays the role of the fa; the dyen-fa-w and the notable members form a sort of council for settling, with the chief, all questions. The cult does nothing on Mondays and Thursdays, the work holidays.

794 A strict internal discipline regulates the members' conduct; this discipline is founded on secrecy, obedience, and speed in carrying out orders. An accused confesses [86] his faults under the effect of the oath, torture, or divination, and the punishments are determined according to the seriousness of the offense in the eyes of the clergy. These punishments are corporal (flogging, confinement in irons, deprivation of food, death) or pecuniary (fines, confiscation); they may include forced labor for the benefit of the clergy. We shall see further on the social and political role these brotherhoods play in Bambara life.

794 796 The Kworé society carries out the rites concerning the sky, space, the cardinal points, and the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, notably rain. The ceremonies generally take place around a tree, the kworé-jigi, situated to the east of the village. The altars are placed either in the brush, in the chief's house, or near the village. The society owns a field of small millet which is reserved to meet the needs of the cult.

The n'Domo includes all the non-circumcised. Heading it [793] is the chief, assisted by a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and by a master of ceremonies, dyoloko-tigi. The society is divided into five grades, corresponding to the five fundamental altars; the initiate advances a grade each year. The society possesses a mask, a whip, and five musical instruments. An annual ceremony takes place after the harvest and includes a blood sacrifice and a ritual fight, followed by a new initiation. The society also owns a ritual field cultivated by its members.

The Nama brotherhood (Nama, "hyena" in Mandé) plays an [776] important role in the Ségou region. Nama is the god of the incomplete, the unique god, whose annual ceremonies at sowing time and harvest time are observed by the men and women together.

794 The society of Kono, whose hut is situated in the middle of the village, must also be mentioned, as well as those of Dyo, an old divinity, Nia or Gnã, Wara, and Duga.

To all of these societies, which have been described by Tauxier, Monteil, G. Dieterlen, etc., must be added the women's societies, still imperfectly known but very powerful and particularly feared by the men. The principal female dyo in the Bamako region are: the Niagua, the Kulukutu, and the Jide which assembles its initiates on Mondays and Fridays.

776 In a word, "if you must work your wickedness on someone or on something, let it not be on our persons or on what belongs to us."

The spirits of the first group are gnéna (1), better known under

> 1. Women and also children often refer to both the djiné and the boli under the generic term gnena, and in the presence of the uninitiated, initiates use these words without making any distinction. It is nonetheless true that the word gnéna denotes a genie called djiné, and the word gnâ a genie called boli.

the name of djiné (Arabic word الجن imported by the Moslems), and those of the second are gnâ, or boli.

As conceived of by a black man, the gnéna, or djiné, are not strictly speaking angels; they are beings intermediate between angels and men. Not only do they eat, drink, procreate, pursue well-being and wealth, they are also /31/ subject to the physical and mental suffering that afflicts human beings, and can die as the victims of the hate, vengeance, or wickedness of a stronger being. Their priests [793 782] are the gnéna-n-sonna or dougoutigi (village chiefs whose jurisdiction is religious and often also civil), and the sacrifices which are offered to them are addressed indirectly and in a very vague and very confused way to a Supreme Being. This vagueness and confusion is apparent especially at the present time, since all ideas of the Divinity are disappearing more and more every day; but it is likely that, in the beginning, God had a greater part in the honors rendered to His deputies, to those whom He appointed as guardians of the elements, dividing among them the empire of His creation.

The djiné remain subject to the authority of the Creator. They have not cast off the yoke and, wicked though they may be, they have not ceased to be good. If they wish, they can do good, protect men, and grant them favors. They punish and chastise because they are above all responsible for the welfare of humanity.

793 The pagan priesthood -- like the Moslem -- also casts a halo of
176 strength and power about its priest; he becomes the close friend of his fetish, and the latter often condescends to take his diamou, or family name, and become, for example, the dasiri, or protecting genie, of a village. Depending on the name of its owner, it will be a Djara or a Kouloubali or a Tankara, etc., etc.

793 An intelligent Bambara who, for one reason or another, cannot
554 be a sorcerer, has one other means of becoming feared and powerful: he can become a gnéna sonna or dougoutigi (priest of the protecting fetish of villages, called dasiri), a gnâtigi or bolitigi (matter of a boli), or at least to belong to a retinue such as surrounds every powerful boli fetish.

793 There are curbs on the thirst for fanga, or power, however. The office of gnéna sonna is the prerogative of a particular family within which it is transmitted from brother to brother by right of inheritance, and not every Negro succeeds in obtaining a boli -- I mean an influential boli that would establish him among his people -- even though one can be obtained by purchase. A man desiring a particular boli must first form a retinue for it, and its members must be taken from the village itself; the mutual mistrust and fear of poison are so great that it is not always possible to do so. Beside the price to be paid, varying between 25 and 30 francs, there are the expenses of the konio, or wedding of the fetish (the purchaser marries his boli), which raise its cost to 60, 80, and sometimes 100 francs. Furthermore, there is a mass of liturgical formulas to be engraved in the memory. These must be learned in every detail, for the omission of one sign or gesture, the garbling of one formula can easily incur the disfavor of the fetish, which is relentless with one who is careless and causes him to perish! It should be added that before a person can reward himself with such a luxury as the acquisition of a fetish, he must consult a sorcerer and take his advice, and if he is not rich and already feared, the sorcerer knows how to place his veto. For the mass
794 of the people there is thus only one way to be safe: to become
793 associated with sects, and with as many sects as possible. Through membership they earn the title of "sons of boli," and build relationships for themselves and make friends among those in power, the

794 bolitigi, the latter have every interest in protecting them, for not
793 only do they pay /38/ their masters annual dues of 80 to 160 cowrie shells, which is little, but they also provide the meats and kola nuts for sacrifices and the d'lo, or beer, for the nocturnal drinking bouts and orgies, and thus are a real godsend.

3. Metamorphosis

776 The Negroes say that a djiné or a boli genie can pass from one
789 body into another. Today it may paddle in a pond, be enclosed in a tree, or sit on a rock; tomorrow, if it wishes, it will make its dwelling in a cow's tail, in a horn, in a dirty rag. Whatever its dwelling may be, it is never confined. The Negroes compare these spirits to the wind, to a breath which enters and penetrates into a space through the smallest crack and fills it. Yet they have bodies and are equipped with organs; they drink, eat, and procreate and differ from man only in their tenuity. Since the Negroes are convinced that certain people have become able to master and command the spirits, could they not come to believe that it was possible to attain, like them, a rarefied state? In any case, they do believe in metamorphosis, and it is by entering into an animal or plant, or changing himself into an animal, a plant, etc., that the wicked person succeeds most often in avenging himself, in appeasing his hatred, and even in doing evil for the mere pleasure of doing it.

789 A good number of sorcerers have this privilege, and sorcerers
564 are not the only ones! Entire castes have the power of metamorphosis;
754 among others the Koulé, who dig out canoes and mend cracked gourds, can all change themselves into hyenas. The sons of the Siri, who are members of the sect dedicated to the boli of this name and are called souba (1) because they commit their crimes during the night, change

1. The name souba is derived from sou ("night") and ba ("great"), ma ("man"), being implied. It means "a man of the great night," "men

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in this respect they are far superior to any of the Arabs of Algeria, for example. Family life is more open and cordial among them.

children do not speak the name of their father, especially if he is a gouatigi, or family head, and when a swarm of children are enjoying themselves around their old daddy, only one word is on all the little lips to awaken his attention, avoid his reprimand, call for his caress, and bring forth his smile: Koké-yo -- koké-wé! (2)

2. I use the word Koké-yo -- (Né koké) koké we (koké, "I beg you, Koké") -- because it is the most common; there are obviously other similar terms. Favorite wives also like to call their husbands by this name. For everyone it is a term of respect and at the same time it is tender, affectionate, and coaxing.

[888] Old men are given borrowed names, bougna toua, out of respect
576 and veneration, and the reason for this practice is to avoid having to
551 speak their names in vain and unsuitably. The practice is current, and it is even carried to an extreme, for although a child is given a respect name within his family, he is never called by that name. How many people there are whose real name is not known except by close
[553] relatives and friends! All the Dougoutigi, To-n-tigi, Ba-koroba, and Moké-touama received a name on the eighth day after their birth, and the names used to designate them are borrowed names. /80/

888 In the environs of Ségou, where Islam is widespread and spreads
793 farther every day, the sacrificers to the protecting genii of the villages,
576 the gnéna-n-sonna ba, or dougoutigi, have lost some of their prestige,
551 but anyone who respects them, even if he be a Moslem, never speaks their names. At the present time in Bani country, where the old customs and traditions are preserved with jealous care, there is not a

888 child, woman, or young man that can tell you the name of the great
193 sacrificer of the village if the latter is in the least old. Out of respect
576 and veneration his name is never spoken; he is the head, and if they
551 are questioned all will answer: "Toua si t'a la dougoutigi ko, he has no other name than that of dougoutigi, head of the village." And, in fact, most of the people know no other name for him.

551 This need to avoid speaking the name of whosoever is respected,
576 venerated, or feared goes so far as to bring about the abbreviation of
778 phrases customarily used in salutations (1), so it can easily be imagined

1. See what I said in this connection in the preceding chapter, /section on/ "Reincarnation of Souls," pertaining to Ouentja.

that the name of the fetishes is not known except by their masters and their initiates. Of course, a Moslem, a woman, an uncircumcised man, or an unexcised woman can tell you the number of the gnéna and gnâ owned by the village, and they also know whether the gnéna (djiné) include a Dasiri, Ngolo, Koté, Ntomo, Tauri, etc., and whether the gnâ (boli, sétané) include a Komo, Nia, Douga, Kono, Nama, Bala, etc. But except for the initiates, who could tell you that a certain boli is called Sélé, Magné, Toroba, Dono, or Nono, or that the Magna is also called Tjarofign and the Nama, Sirima-n-fign? Only the generic name is known, and it is in good taste not to pronounce even that when extending an invitation to a festival in its honor. The Nama is enclosed in a beehive in the shade of a tamarind tree, which in turn are enclosed in coarse mats, and when an invitation is given to the sacrifice, the most stylish formula is: "Come and see us, an bi djasé (2) son, we are sacrificing to the /81/ palisade." The trumpet

2. Djasé, name of a palisade composed of large mats. Children born at the time of the sacrifices to the Nama, who are dedicated to the fetish, are frequently given the name

Such a spirit is the exclusive property of one family, and even bears its name, or diamou. Its sacrificer, called gnéna-n-sonnaba, also bears the name of dougoutigi (1); he is, in fact, the real head of

1. Gnena, "fetish," "genie"; sonnaba, "great sacrificer"; dougou, "village"; tigi, "head," "master."

Typical Bambara headman.

the village. Although at present the civil and religious authorities are separate in many places, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or religious priest, always holds precedence, and self-respecting people call him dougoutigi (head of the village), giving the title of sotigi (2) to the

2. So, "hut," "house"; tigi, "head."

one who has only civil authority. Here we have further evidence that the organization of the Bambara nation was, at its origin purely religious. The separation of the two authorities in certain hamlets can easily be understood.

Under the Bambara dynasty the kingdom of Ségou was divided into provinces, cantons, and villages. The king, Fama or Massa

631 ("great sorcerer who has communication with the invisible beings"), lived at Ségou with his court. At the head of each of his provinces he had a minister responsible for levying the tax (/this man was/ his tool, often one of his children, to whom -- doubtless for this reason -- was given the title of Fama, petty king. The minister did his work through the intermediary of the heads of cantons, or kafotigi, under who, with respect to civil matters, were all the heads of villages, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi. /100/

The levying of the tax often gave rise to disputes between the kafotigi and the dougoutigi, and the latter would resign from his functions or be relieved of them. After that he lost all civil powers but none of his religious or priestly authority, and since the religious sphere had precedence over the civil, he kept his title of dougoutigi in his role as gnéna-n-sonnaba. The one who replaced him /in the civil sphere/ was never anything but an upstart and worthy only of the name sotigi ("head of houses"), although his responsibility became hereditary.

798 Under Moslem domination the worship of the gnéna, or djiné,
● 793 was forbidden and punished by very severe penalties (slavery or death).
621 It can thus be believed that it was to the advantage of the gnena-n-sonnaba to keep their position quiet, to refuse the title of dougoutigi, and even to forbid their people to bestow it on them. In Bani country and among the Bambara of Sikasso and Koutiala, where Moslem domination was never solidly established, there was no cause for similar fears, and it is understandable that the custom of calling the religious head dougoutigi and the civil head sotigi has been retained.

621 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, is helped in his duties
793 by a siéré (aide, deputy); the heads of quarters (sotigi) and the heads of families (gouatigi) make up his council. Nothing important is done in the village without consulting its head, who calls all his elders together and decides nothing without them. All of them are also present at any sacrifice if it is offered by a family, and it is not unusual to see them going single file, evening or morning, to the sacred grove of the fetish. On the morning of a marriage, they always go there.

776 The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and
778 sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked
621 people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can
793 peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

794 Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the
776 worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first
778 and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in
[824] a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

794 The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country.
Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

794 At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the
778 sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

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852 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

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621 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

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[482] The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted, and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

621 The palavers and deliberations are long, but the choice is a
793 happy one; the old man chosen as gnéna-n-sonnaba always has the
555 slyness and guile characteristic of the Bambara type. Patient and likeable, he will know how to be just and impartial in disputes, diplomatic and sufficiently master of himself to say only what he intends to. He will know how to acquire the reputation of an upright man who does not know theft or falsehood.

621 Elected for life to hold both civil and religious power, he is
793 truly the head of the village, the dougoutigi. His position is hereditary; it passes from brother to brother and, when there are none, goes by right to his oldest son. The one who is to succeed him becomes his aide (siéré), and the heads of families (gouatigi-ou) compose his council; they are always summoned when a question is to be handled or a decision made.

The Choice of the dasiri fetish and its sacred mount

776 The new village has a head, his aide, and its council; it is
778 organized. Now they must find out the whereabouts of the spring,
787 rock, or tree where lives the protecting spirit, the dougou dasiri (1),

1. Dougou dasiri: /dougou/, "village"; da, "mouth," "entrance"; siri, "bind."

who fastens the entrance to the village and watches over it. For this knowledge the people appeal to a sorcerer; he has intimate contact with the spirits, knows their ways and customs, and understands their language.

There are many sorcerers, and they do not all work in the same way. One discovers his oracles in the entrails of a hen, a second traces cabalistic signs on ashes, a third endlessly moves little stones, bones, and cowrie shells, counting them again and again. To locate the dasiri, people have recourse to the flélikéla (2) diviner, who

2. Flélikéé, "to look attentively, curiously."

793 782 62 778 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, assumes office from the first day and offers a sacrifice in the name of his people. On the trunk of the tree, about a meter from the ground, he pours d'lo, or millet beer, and dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with water, and causes a flow of blood from hens, roosters, goats, and sometimes from a young bull. After this general sacrifice, individual ones follow, for, in order to /118/ place himself under the protection of the genie, each family head in order of seniority offers it a little dégé and a little blood, through the intermediary of his leader, the priest. And on the trunk of the tree there is nothing but great blood stains with feathers, hairs, and shreds of skin stuck in their midst with the remains of chewed kola nuts. Then come the dances, and men, women, and children go into a frenzy at the sound of drums; and the tumult is indescribable.

Sacrifices offered to the dasiri

778 782 796 A path a meter wide leads from the village to the fetish tree which is always located in the middle of a small grove if possible. Heads of families sacrifice to it several times a year -- on the morning after the konio, or first night of marriage, for example, but the festival in which the whole village takes part is annual. The ceremony has greater importance every second year, and every seventh year it degenerates into an orgy.

During the sacrifice the women stay at the edge of the sacred grove, and only the men and boys go inside and surround the fetish. After an offering of dégé and a little d'lo, the throat of a sheep or goat is cut in the name of the whole village, and the head of each family, comes with hens, sheep, goats, etc., according to the family's means and the number of members; the meat piles up. The hens are plucked on the spot, the large pieces are cut up, and the women carry it all back to the village. Each family head is given a piece as big as a fist from the first sacrifice offered in the name of all, and this, too, is [252] taken back to the village; the rest is roasted and then grilled on the spot and eaten by the men, without salt, pepper, or any kind of seasoning. The dégé and d'lo of the main sacrifice are drunk under

[846] [852] [553] The navel dries between the sixth and eighth day. The headman and elders are told of the event, and all the heads of families (the gouatigou) come and sit in order of age and rank at the entrance door of the hut which opens into the court of the confined woman. The religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba (2), goes alone into the hut

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2. Usually it is the religious head, priest of the dasiri, who shaves the child, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some villages it is the civil head who performs the tonsure; in others this task is the prerogative of a family. Sometimes the shaving is done by the father or the grandfather. The families in which this custom is followed are not pure Bambara but are mixed with Marka blood.

and /170/ shaves the head of the infant on its mother's knees. Long [20] [431] lines of women push into the inner court, clap their hands, let out shrill cries of "kouyo kouyo" as signs of joy, and give their friend a small present of millet and cotton (1).

1. The women give a handful of cotton and about a pound of millet.

When the head of the child has been shaved and well cleaned, the headman lays his hands on him to drive away evil spirits that might wish to harm his life; he gently strokes his back and chest and, spitting lightly, recites a short formula which he alone knows and can understand. Then he goes and sits among his people, and the father presents him with eleven kola nuts on a platter of braided grass. The heads of families, in order of age, place their offering of 40 to 80 cowrie shells (2) on this same platter, and the gnéna-sonnaba asks

2. The men give 40 cowrie shells. The generous ones go as high as 80.